THE WIDENESS OF GOD'S MERCY

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F. B. MEYER

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Author of "Israel, a Prince with God." "Reveries and Realities," "Blessed are Ye," etc.

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PREFACE

The substance of the following pages was delivered as the Annual Sermon of the London Missionary Society, but I have greatly extended and amplified the original draft, until it has assumed the present shape.

The main principles have long been shaping themselves in my mind; and I am convinced that they are truer to fact than much of the ordinary thinking and speaking which is in vogue with regard to the heathen world.

God must be consistent with Himself, and pursue one method of dealing with mankind, though He speaks "by divers portions and in divers manners."

F. B. MEYER.

CHRIST CHURCH,
WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD,
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I

WITNESSES THAT SPEAK IN ALL LANGUAGES FOR GOD

"Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness."—Acts xiv. 17.

"The God that made the world and all things therein."—Acts xvii. 24.

During the last hundred years, which is approximately the term of modern Missionary effort, a vast change has taken place in the views held by the Christian Church on the condition of the heathen after death. The old formulary, "The heathen are perishing; shall we let them perish?" does not mean to-day quite what it used to mean. The conception of the countless populations of the globe pouring in a steady cataract into the bottomless pit no longer grips and holds the mind or imagination, and as the destiny of the heathen world in the great

future becomes less defined and oppressive, one of the strongest incentives for Missionary endeavour is sensibly weakened, and good people are inclined to say, "Let us leave well alone. Things are not so bad as was feared. God is good, and all will come right at last." I venture to think that this attitude on the part of multitudes of Christian people is at the root of the present stagnation in Missionary enterprise, and the reason, in part, of the depletion of the Missionary exchequer.

Nothing, therefore, is more necessary in the present day than to re-construct a basis and argument for Christian Missions. *We believe* in God's love for the world, a love which includes every unit of the human family; *we believe* that ours is a redeemed race, that the Cross has put away the sin of man, that in Christ God has reconciled the world to Himself; *we believe* that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness

is accepted by Him;—what need then that we should preach the Gospel to every creature? Granted that the marching orders of our Lord are clear and distinct, is it possible to enforce them on the ground of reason and experience?

An answer to these questions is furnished in the remarkable addresses of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, whether standing amid the remoter wilds of Lycaonia or the focussed glory of the pagan civilisation of his time. In these he necessarily touched upon the three main religious influences of the world: Natural Religion; the Mission of Judaism; and the Message of the Gospel. These three threads were woven throughout the matchless fabric of his appeals. Let us consider specially that made before the Areopagus (Acts xvii. 19).

The religion of ancient Greece lay altogether outside the influence of Hebrew literature and ideals. There was not even a synagogue in Athens; and that city,

therefore—the crown and flower of Greece—gave unrivalled opportunity for the study of any solution, which the human mind can formulate, to the mystery of God, of life, and of the world.

Driven thither by the violence of his enemies, and awaiting the arrival of his friends, the Apostle gave himself to the quiet study of the religious aspects around him. On every side stood the loftiest achievements of human genius. As he issued morning by morning from his humble lodging, he beheld the long colonnades of shops, sublime conceptions in temple and statue, "the severe beauty of the Parthenon, the massive proportions of the Theseum, the exquisite elegance of the Temple of Wingless Victory, the rude grace and sinewy strength of the youthful processions, portrayed on frieze and entablature, and sharply defined in the sunny air." But as he passed his special interest was

attracted by the objects of their worship, the inscriptions on their altars, and the discussions of Jew and Proselyte, of Stoic and Epicurean, concerning the sacred mysteries of religion. Paul was not indifferent to the attractions of art and beauty, but his soul was filled with an over-mastering religious enthusiasm, and was set on contrasting the results of natural religion with his message of Jesus and the Resurrection.

Athens was a city of statues, and his early training as a Jew prejudiced him against all representations of the human form. During his residence as a student in Jerusalem he had never once beheld in sculpture or painting the face or figure of man, and had been taught to consider such attempts as direct violations of the second word of the decalogue. But even these aroused less indignation than the images of the gods and goddesses, and the altars erected to their worship, which confronted him on every side.

So numerous were the representations of the deities of the Pantheon that it was said to be more easy to meet a god than a man in the streets of Athens. Whichever way the visitor turned, an altar confronted him, at which devotees were making their offerings. Small wonder then that the spirit of the Apostle was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols.

But there was no passionate show of resentment in his speech. He did not open his mission to the Athenians by a furious tirade against the absurdity of idolatry as such, nor did he hold up to ridicule and scorn the obscene stories of their gods and goddesses, but with admirable sagacity and good sense he seized on the one hopeful sign in it all, that the people whom he was addressing were very eager and sensitive about religious matters. He was careful to place this sentiment in the forefront of his address. The rendering of the

A.V., "I perceive, men of Athens, that in all things ye are too superstitious," is absolutely inadmissible. Even the "somewhat religious" of the R.V. does not meet the case. "Very devout" or "unusually religious" would be a truer rendering of the Greek; and it is much to be regretted that for so long the impression has been produced that the first note of the missionary's address should be critical and polemical, rather than considerate and conciliatory.

It seemed to Paul as though the profusion of idols around him, and especially the altar reared to "an unknown God," were proofs of the strong and instinctive cravings of a religious spirit. So far from the claims of religion being regarded with coldness and apathy, here was a whole nation intent on religious inquiry. They were seeking God if haply they might feel after Him; and the word employed is extremely picturesque, suggesting the fumbling of a blind man to

find the latch of the door. Tennyson hit off the conception with apt grace in his well-known lines:—

> I stretch lame hands of faith, and *grope*,
> And gather dust and chaff, and call
> To what I feel is Lord of all.

There are five sources of religious knowledge which are within the reach of men who are outside what we know as Revelation.

1. *The Witness of Creation.* "Not a flower or leaf but bears the mark of God's unrivalled pencil!" What may be known of Him is made plain to men's inmost consciousness, for God Himself has made it plain to them; for from the very creation of the world His eternal power and divine nature have been made visible by His works (Rom. i. 19, 20).

2. *The Witness of Daily Mercy.* Addressing a simple agricultural people, the Apostle, in obvious allusion to one of their familiar lyric songs, reminded them that during the past generations God had not left Himself without witness,

because of the daily mercies which He had sent, "giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness." Those who have visited the great plains of India, and seen the myriads of people engaged in their simple agricultural toils, and have interpreted them by the music of the old Vedic hymns, will be able to appreciate the Apostle's allusion. The exquisite and constant sunshine, the return of the bountiful seasons, and the rich yield of the soil, are all productive of that glad recognition of the Creator which His gifts are calculated to inspire.

3. *There is the Witness of Man's Moral Nature.* From the beginning, the Eternal Word has lighted every man coming into the world. "As there was a diffused light through the universe before the sun, and as that diffused luminous mist became centred and embodied in the sun," so there always have been glimmerings of Truth in the minds of men,

which have emanated from the Word of God. His Life was the Light of men. The great moral intuitions, common to all men, of every age, and dwelling in every quarter of the globe, show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts accusing and excusing one another.

4. *The Fourth Witness has been supplied by the great Prophets and Teachers of the Race.* Not from the Hebrew race alone, but from all races, God has called forth great souls who have received His messages for their contemporaries and all after time. We utter their names with reverence, and acknowledge the important contributions that have been made to the religious history of the race by Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Plato, and other prophetic souls, who have reared themselves like soaring Alps above their fellows, catching and reflecting the light of the Eternal. Of course they have

apprehended many of the truths and almost the phrases which are familiar to the lovers of the Bible, because all truth is one, and the Spirit of Truth is one, and the Light that is diffused from the Word, Who was and is, and is to come, must ever be one and the same.

5. *The Fifth Witness has been furnished by the Educative Effect of Divine Providence.* The words of the Apostle in this discourse before the men of Athens are as significant as they are unmistakable. As a father will plan the education of his children with careful thought that each may have the best opportunity of developing and using his special powers, so he describes the Almighty as having prescribed for each nation the times of its rise, ascendancy, and fall, its allotted position on the map of the world, its precise location in time and place among the nations, that its children might have the best opportunity possible for seeking after God, if haply they might feel after

Him and find Him. The pressure of war, the struggle for supremacy, the stern discipline of defeat, the anguish of oppression—all were permitted and intended, like the experiences of the Book of Judges, to lead the peoples of the world to search and try their ways, and turn again to Him. A history has yet to be written which shall show the loving purpose of God amid the fret of the tides and storms which have swept the seas of human history.

As the result of these sources of religious knowledge and inspiration, men have made profound discoveries. One of the noblest monuments to the results of natural religion is that furnished by the Book of Job:

The Spirit of God hath made me,
And the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.
He stretcheth out the north over empty space,
And hangeth the earth upon nothing.
He buildeth up the waters in His thick clouds,
And stirreth up the sea with His power.
By His Spirit the heavens are garnished,
His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.

Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways,
And how small a whisper do we hear of Him,
But the thunder of His power who can understand?
Behold! I am vile, what shall I answer Thee?
I lay my hand upon my mouth.

To this magnificent tribute to the discoveries of natural religion we may add one or two extracts from other sources, of the results of man's search for the unknown God. This from the Vedas: "One sovereign Ruler pervades this world of worlds. Nurture thyself with that single thought. This one single Spirit, which nothing can disturb, is swifter than the thought of man. It moves the universe at its pleasure; it is distant from us, and yet very near to all things; it pervades this entire universe, and yet is infinitely beyond it. The man who has learnt to recognise all beings in this Supreme Spirit, and this Supreme Being in all things, can henceforth look upon no creature with contempt." "O God, who knowest all beings, purify us

from every sin, and we shall be enabled to consecrate to Thee our holiest adorations."

These noble confessions belong to the dawn of history, in the blue azure of that past when our forefathers still dwelt under the shadow of the Himalayas. At a later period, though still very ancient, these words are put in the lips of Krishna: "I am the cause of the production and dissolution of the whole universe. There exists no other thing superior to me. On me is all the universe suspended, as pearls on a string. I am the savour in waters, and the luminous principle in moon and sun. I am dear to the spiritually wise beyond possessions, and he is dear to me."

Or descend still further on the stream of Time. Seneca writes thus to his friend Lucilius, "God is near you, is with you, is within you. A sacred Spirit dwells within us, the Observer and Guardian of all our evil and our good. There is no

good man without God. Even from a corner it is possible to spring up into heaven. Rise therefore, and form thyself into a fashion worthy of God; thou canst not do this, however, with gold and silver: an image like to God cannot be formed out of such materials as those."

Let these quotations suffice—they are enough to show that it has always been possible for the human mind to arrive at very sublime and true conceptions of the nature of God: and they are a striking comment on those great words of Malachi, "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, God's name is great among the nations, and in *every* place incense has been offered unto His name, and a pure offering; for His name is great among the Gentiles."

There can be no doubt that by these means myriads of souls, who lived and died with no other teaching than that of natural reason, have entered into the

Kingdom, coming from east and west, from north and south, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the representatives of the children of Revelation—in the Kingdom of Heaven: and they have been admitted on precisely the same terms as those on which we hope to be accepted.

It is sometimes said thoughtlessly that the heathen will be saved if they live up to the light they have. But who has ever lived up to the light he had? Do *we* live up to the light we have? If our salvation depended on our living up to the light we had, who of us would pass muster? No, we are saved because we exercise faith in God. Like Abraham, the father of them that believe, we believe in God, and our faith is reckoned to us for righteousness; *i.e.*, it is the germ of the religious and holy character, which shall ultimately emerge and be conformed to the image of the Son. Underneath all is the reconciliation

wrought by God in the person of the dying Redeemer, which removed every obstacle to the full outpouring of divine grace to us and to every member of the human family. But we are saved, not because we have accurate views of that redemption, but because we are joined by a living faith to Him who made the redemption; faith being the channel through which God may pour Himself to our infilling.

Similarly God deals with the heathen. They also are saved by faith, on the basis of the finished Redemption of the Lord Jesus. In other words, if they exercise faith towards such knowledge of God as is possible to them, *i.e.*, if they possess a faith which, if they had had the chance of knowing Christ, would have leapt to Him, and touched the hem of His garment, God, who searches the heart, and knows what would have happened in Tyre and Sidon and the cities of the Plain, if they had heard of the

mighty works of Christ, deals with them on the basis of the faith they have, anticipating the hour when that faith, which is an attitude towards God, and the embryo capacity for receiving God, shall no longer be an unfurled bud, but shall open to its full radiance and glory in the tropical atmosphere of heaven.

I can never forget the discussions which I was accustomed to hold in India at the close of my addresses. As I write, one specially comes to mind. At the close of an afternoon service in one of the public halls of Bombay, a number of intelligent and thoughtful men gathered round me, who said that my teaching of the inner life, and especially of the negation of self, was not what they were generally accustomed to hear from the lips of a Christian teacher, though it was exactly in line with much that was taught in their own religious books. They told

me that one objection which they had towards the religion of Jesus Christ was that, so far as it had been presented to them, it seemed so exclusively objective in its testimony, and gave so little room for those deeper teachings of the subjective discipline of the spirit which appeared to them so all-important. From that conversation, as from many others that I held in India, I came to the conclusion that it would be wiser if missionaries could find out the point to which God's training has led inquiring souls around them in order to lead them forward by those further revelations which Christ has given. We should seek out the Corneliuses of the world, men who have gone as far as natural religion can carry them, and whose tears and prayers come up as a memorial before God. They are waiting for our message. They are prepared for it. They will receive it gladly. The Holy Spirit will fall on them whilst we

speak; and they may be trusted to pass on the glad tidings to their kinsfolk and near friends. When travelling through India, I habitually asked of the missionaries, "Do you know of a Cornelius in this district?" Invariably I was answered in the affirmative. Everywhere there are devout souls, who have gone as far as their opportunities allowed, and are yearning for a completer revelation, and especially for the announcement that Christ is the Wisdom and the Power of God. Such men are prepared by God to become the recipients and transmitters of the higher revelations of the Gospel. Than these, it would be impossible for our missionaries to have nobler coadjutors and allies. They are like prepared beacon-fires, which only need an illuminating and kindling spark.

It is interesting to recall the eagerness with which the non-Christian natives of India heard from my lips teaching

as to those higher or deeper truths, concerning the crucifixion of the self-life in order to the indwelling of the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit; and I have been since deeply convinced that the prime work of our missionary societies is to discover the souls with whom the Divine Spirit has already been at work, ascertaining the stage which they have reached in the divine life, and endeavouring to lead them forward to those loftier conceptions and fuller receptions of God which are only possible where the full-orbed splendour of New Testament light is shining. These, as I have said, become our best allies and helpers in further permeating the masses, which have been content with living on the lowest levels, convicting them of sin, and leading them into the powers of the world to come.

You may remember how Frederic W. H. Myers deals with this scene; and

the effect that the Apostle's words had on the woman Damaris. It is a parable which illustrates and confirms all I have said.

She as one wild, whom many stripes enharden,
Leapt many times from torture of a dream,
Shrank by the pallid olives of the garden,
Groves of a teacher, and Ilissus stream.

Then to their temple Damaris would clamber,
Stood where an idol in the lifted sky,
Bright in a light and eminent in amber,
Heard not, nor pitied her, nor made reply.

Thence the strong soul, which never power can pinion,
Sprang with a wail into the empty air;
Thence the wide eyes upon a hushed dominion
Looked in a fierce astonishment of prayer.

Looked to Hymettus and the purple heather,
Looked to Peiræus and the purple sea,
Blending of waters and of winds together,
Winds that were wild and waters that were free.

Therefore with set face and with smiling bitter,
Took she the anguish, carried it apart;
Ah, to what friend to speak it? it were fitter
Thrust in the aching hollows of her heart.

Then I preached Christ, and when she heard
the story,
Oh, is such triumph possible to men?
Hardly, my King, had I beheld Thy glory,
Hardly had known Thine excellence, till
then.

Thou in one fold the afraid and the forsaken,
Thou with one shepherding, canst soothe
and save:
Speak but the word! the Evangel shall
awaken
Life in the lost, the hero in the slave.

II

"LAME HANDS OF FAITH"

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." —Acts xvii, 27.

It is remarkable to notice the statement which the Apostle makes in these far-reaching words. He tells us precisely that God has appointed and determined the seasons or times at which the nations appear on the face of the earth, the duration of their existence and the precise bounds of their dominion. It was not by accident that the great empires of the Euphrates preceded all later civilisation. The rise, glory and fall of Egypt were matters of Divine prescience and arrangement. Greece and Rome, Spain and Germany, Great Britain and the United States, have coloured the

map of the world in the order and after the fashion which the Almighty pre-arranged, just as successive orders of annuals and flowering plants succeed each other in the gardens and on the wolds. Nothing left to haphazard, nothing trusted to chance, nothing the result of the wit or vehemence of man.

The Apostle says that all these arrangements as to season and location were determined in order "that men should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." Thus every race of man has had an opportunity of knowing God which was best suited to its special peculiarities. The Egyptians, for instance, who built the Pyramids and reared the Sphinx upon the sands, had a better chance of being religious and knowing God within those sedate and slow-moving ages, when the scream of the locomotive and the rush of the motor-car were unknown. It will be seen at last that every man and household,

every family and nation, was situated in the best possible position to promote the discovery of God.

But after all there are great limitations to the discoveries of natural religion. Only a few comparatively find their way through the strait gate into the narrow path. For the few that feel after God and find Him, there are uncounted myriads who sink back into the swift-flowing waters of self-indulgence and sensual passion. And even of the *elect* souls of natural religion it must be admitted that there is a bewildering uncertainty, a sickening sense of fear, and often profound moral lapse, which have left indelible stains on their record. God spoke to men at sundry times and in divers manners, but the sayings upon the harps of human consciousness have been dark. Men have had no idea of God's love and goodness as they have been revealed in Christ. Augustine spoke wisely when he said that in Plato

and Cicero he had met with many utterances which were beautiful and wise, but amongst them all he had never found "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Bishop Butler's words come back to our memory, when he said that the great doctrines of a future state and the dangers of a course of wickedness, and of the efficacy of repentance, are taught in the Gospel *with a degree of light to which that of nature is darkness.*

We cannot forget that Marcus Aurelius, the loftiest of pagan moralists, cruelly persecuted the Christians of the empire. Contrast the noble witness given by the founder of the Moslem faith to the Unity and Spirituality of God with the gross sensuality of his later life. Bear in mind that the tit-bits we have selected from the sacred books are in many cases as jewels flashing on continents of mud; that the philosophy of Confucius leaves the great Chinese people with the

superstitious worship of ancestors and with no knowledge of God; that the nature-worship of the East has always descended into unknown depths of vice; that the teeming multitudes of India are tormented by the fear of Nats, ghosts, departed spirits; that their temples and priests promote the gratification of the basest passions under the guise of religion; and that far and wide throughout the world infanticide is practised, woman is debased, abominable cruelty is practised in war and peace, religion is reduced to prayer-wheels, fortune-telling, medicine-doctors, and the senseless repetition of meaningless rites. Let it not be forgotten also that the first chapter of the Romans, in which the Apostle describes the world of his time, cannot be read through in a Christian congregation, but, as missionaries will tell you in private and confidential talks, may be taken as an unexaggerated account of the condition of the major portion of the

heathen world. Men may say what they will about Regent Street and Piccadilly Circus, but at least they must acknowledge that their abominations are done *at night*, are veiled as far as possible by stealth, are condemned by the laws of our statute-book, and cause a blush not only to Christians, but to the average intelligence and morality of our time —very different this to the immorality which flaunts itself in heathen lands under the eye of day, and assumes the garb of religious rites. The faiths of paganism, it has been truly said, lack the dynamic power which is indispensable for the deliverance of men from the mastery of sin, for the creation of the purest manhood and womanhood, or for effecting social and communal regeneration.

Perhaps the worst symptom of all is the apathy with which the non-Christian peoples view their moral condition, as individuals, or in their institutions. The

missionary's chief difficulty is to pierce the crust of proud and supercilious satisfaction with things as they are, to break up the moral torpor, to create the sense of sin, and to excite those yearnings after a better life which are the pre-requisite of salvation.

To sum up: (1) *The heathen are never certain about God.* They go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but they cannot perceive Him. If the Pleiades tell them of His smile, what of Orion? If summer with her horn of plenty encourages them to count on His love, what of winter with its iron soil and dark skies? (2) *They think that they must propitiate Him with gifts.* But the question is how much will He demand. Shall they give their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul? and can they even then count surely on His forgiveness? (3) *They are not sure about the Future.* They go to the land

of darkness, and of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as darkness. The pagan chieftain, who arose in the council assembled to hear Paulinus, uttered the spirit of all thoughtful non-Christian religions when he compared human life to the swift flight of a sparrow through the royal supper-room in winter. It flies in at one door and out at another. After a short space in the brilliantly lit apartment, it vanishes out of sight into the storms of snow and rain. "So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before and of what is to follow we are utterly ignorant."

(4) *Natural Religion cannot supply power unto salvation.* It is a mistake to suppose that the state of the world, as it is to-day, is due to the determined choice of man to be evil; it is rather due to inability to be and do the things which reason and conscience alike demand. The story of Heathenism is the long,

bitter record of bright hopes dimmed, of the desert-mirage dying on the sands, of the mockery of the most resolute vows, the most strenuous endeavours. Men have seen and approved the better, but for lack of power seem doomed to do the worse. "Brought into captivity," "sold under sin," these are the expressions which best describe man's moral condition, while his better self cries out from the dungeon it has built around itself, "O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" That marvellous piece of sculpture, "The Dying Gladiator," seems struck out of stone to crystallise for ever the spirit of the age in which it was produced—an age of blank despair, unrelieved by a single ray of hope. In the wisdom of God mankind knew not God; and the hopelessness that fell like a spell on some of the wisest and strongest spirits of the age in which Christ was born was a midnight darkness, which

has left appalling records in words that call across the centuries from the pages of the classic authors.

But all through this dense and hopeless darkness the heart of man never ceased to feel after God, if haply it might find Him. As the shell drawn from the ocean depths and borne far inland when placed to the ear continues to sigh for the roaring seas, its native home, so the soul of man has ever cried out for God, for the Living God. Often it was only a sense of vacancy, of an empty void, or an unsatisfied instinct. Men knew not what they wanted, but knew they wanted something. As the prodigal could not rest in the far country, so man could not rest apart from the home of the Eternal Father.

In the Exhibition of 1862 there was a beautiful statue of a girl in a listening attitude, which commemorates an incident connected with the slow occupation of territory in the Far West. In those

days, when there was almost ceaseless strife between the Indians and the settlers, a baby girl was stolen from a white settlement, and adopted by an Indian tribe, where she grew up to beautiful girlhood. The mother never ceased her search for her child. She believed instinctively that she was living somewhere. For weary years she visited every Indian tribe with the same inquiry, and at last was told that in the midst of a fierce and distant community a beautiful white girl had been seen by the traders. Thither the mother wended her way. As soon as she caught sight of the girl's face, her maternal heart recognised her child, but so many years had passed that there was no recognition on the part of the maiden until the mother began to croon over the songs with which she had been accustomed to soothe her baby to slumber, and when the tremulous voice sang again those cradle-songs of far-away years they

awakened memories in the girl's heart. She stood wistfully listening, and then, with a rush of tears, cried "Mother," the one word which she remembered of the old English tongue. It was thus that God sought man, and man needed God, and as the voice of the unseen Father sounded through creation and rang down into the depths of the heart, man wistfully stood listening. On the one hand, there was the blackness of darkness, an almost desperate hopelessness, and on the other there was the unfailing search. So it befell that, instinctively, the race turned away from lower forms of religion, from the stone-circle with its human sacrifice, from the licentious rites of the Phœnician groves, from the abominations of Moloch, Chemosh, and Baal. In the face of the trend and current to which the gratification of the lower passions inclined them, men cherished the consciousness that there must be something better for them than

these, and sighed with unutterable and insatiable desire for light and life and love.

One of the most striking scenes it was ever my lot to witness, which illustrates the rejection on the part of man of the lower conceptions of God for the higher, was that furnished by my visit to Benares. On our arrival there, as we drove slowly through the streets, we were arrested first by the infinite number of temples that met the eye at every turn. There are more than 1,900 of them, and the multitude of chapels is beyond all counting. Indeed, the idol population is nearly twice as numerous as the human, amounting to something like 500,000. The tortuous streets were swarming with half-naked men. It was impossible to enter the sacred places because of the density of the crowds. Here the Brahmins walked majestically; there the Fakirs sat at the street corners, naked and covered with ashes, their

glassy eyes fixed as though they saw nothing. Right and left the streets were lined with stalls covered with religious objects, necklaces, rosaries, and strange emblems. Situated in niches in the walls, monstrous gods with elephantine heads and serpent-encircled bodies greeted us. Wells, supposed to be inhabited by gods, from which fœtid odours arose, were encircled by dense masses of struggling people. Presently a procession would come along for which everybody must make way, or the sacred cattle would receive universal homage. Along the roofs monkeys gambolled and chattered. It seemed as though the millions of the past who had thronged those streets were still pervading them with their presence, and the atmosphere was heavy with the pressure of the power of darkness.

On the following morning we visited the sacred river Ganges, which spread its brown choppy current between the

desert stretch of sand on the right bank and the long line of temples, palaces, and mosques with marble walls on the left. All along the shore immense stairs descended to the water's edge, on which the morning sunshine was glittering. These steps were crowded with pilgrims, worshippers, and priests, who had come to adore the rising sun, and perform their ablutions in the river. It is impossible to forget the scene when once it has been witnessed—that broad stream, those flights of steps, the vast throngs of people, men and women, Brahmins and Sudras, pilgrims from all parts of India, lifting the water to their heads, flinging themselves into the water, standing in the attitude of prayer, or drinking long, deep draughts. Amidst all this moving scene are the funeral piles on which the dead are burnt, the ashes from which will presently be thrown into the water. Thousands of pigeons fly about in the pure air, crows and vultures

wait for their food, smoke arises from the cremation of the dead bodies.

This is Hindooism, with its adoration of 330 million gods; with its worship of animals, trees, plants, and stones; with its pantheism, polytheism, and dreams of incarnation; which worships life as it comes and goes, and finds expression in all sorts of objects. It was a never-to-be-forgotten spectacle, and to realise that this had gone on for uncounted centuries, and to remember that it is going on every day still, and that, in spite of everything that Christianity can do, it is still vigorous, gives a new commentary to the text that men feel after God if haply they may find Him.

But in the midst of all this, looking upward, our gaze was suddenly arrested by the vision of a lovely mosque whose white exterior gleamed against the blue of the sky. Its twin minarets sprang straight upwards, as though protesting against the hideous corruptions of

Hindooism, and appealing for a higher and loftier conception of the Deity. Whilst the murmur and rustle of multitudinous life arises from the river bank, there high up above it all in its serene calm stands this white mosque, from the pinnacle of which the muezzin daily calls for prayer and cries, "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His prophet." It was there that for the first time I understood the true significance of Mohammed's protest against the degradation of the conception of God which was prevalent in his time. It seemed as though the Christian Church had become paralysed, as though there was no hope of arresting the downward progress of the world, as though the mind of man were destined to be for ever drenched and steeped in the grossest immorality and materialism. Then Mohammed was raised up, and as the ploughshare breaks up the clods, so his conquests and those of his generals were used to break up the

religions of the world, and especially to be the scourge of the recreant Christian Church. And here in India, the marvellous exhibitions of genius which characterised the Mohammedan invasion under Akbar Khan—the Taj, the Pearl Mosque, the palaces and treasures of Agra and other cities, all reveal the accomplished emancipation of the human mind from the maze and misunderstanding with which it had been so long enchained, and its protests on behalf of a sublimer, purer faith.

What was true in that one instance has no doubt been true of the rise of every great religion which the world has ever seen. What was Confucianism, or Buddhism, the religion of Zoroaster, or Moslemism, but the feeling after God, the expression of a passionate desire to find God, the revolt against the lower forms and conceptions of the Divine Being, and the insistence that the Creator must be greater than the creature, that somewhere

there must be a great Spirit who could satisfy the aspirations and yearnings of the spirit of man.

The Infinite Father, whose offspring men are, as the Apostle tells us, must have regarded all these efforts with infinite tenderness. His Spirit was even then striving with the false notions of men, and by His sure guidance He was leading the race slowly towards the fulness of the time when He should speak to all men through His Son, "Who is the effulgence of His glory, and the express image of His person." The satisfaction of the race could not be indefinitely delayed, and so we come to the magnificent assertion of the Apostle that when the fulness of the time was come, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem, and that men might receive the adoption of sons." Through this long process, as we have seen, there were innumerable multitudes who, like

Cornelius, feared God and wrought righteousness, and of whom Peter said, "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him."

A number of natives once asked me what, in my judgment, had become of their ancestors. I replied that it depended entirely upon whether they had exercised faith in such light as they possessed, for if they had done so it seemed to me reasonable to suppose that God, Who searches the heart, and knows all things, would give them credit for a faith which, if Christ had been proclaimed to them, would certainly have embraced Him because it so eagerly received that amount of truth which lay within its reach. I said that God would impute righteousness to faith, though knowledge were very slender and immature, just as He imputed righteousness to the faith of Abraham, "which he had being yet

uncircumcised." *It is not the amount of truth that faith embraces, but it is the attitude of faith towards such truth as is revealed that determines the condition of the soul both here and hereafter.* "But," I said, "as soon as your forefathers entered the other life, they would discover that they were accepted in the virtue of what Jesus Christ did for every man when He tasted death on the Cross, and became a Propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The first thing, as it appears to me, which will happen upon the other side, is that God will explain to the souls of men who are accepted and crowned that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy that He has saved us, through the grace of the One Man, Jesus Christ."

III

THE MISSION AND FAILURE OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE

"Whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises."—Rom. ix. 4.

Our attention and the attention of the civilised world has been called, with infinite pity, to the sad plight of the Russian Jews. It is almost incredible that at this time in the world's history, and in the light of Christian civilisation, such enormous wrongs should be possible.

Their civilisation antedates that of the modern world. Moses preceded Lycurgus by at least eight hundred years. Before Troy had fallen, or Homer sang, or Ulysses went on his wanderings, God had called Abram, the

first Hebrew, out of the rich culture and science of the Euphrates valley, which recent explorations have revealed, to become the ancestor of an elect race.

It is the custom of many to regard that word with suspicion, but it is a great word, and contains a great conception. Too often it has suggested ideas of privation and exclusion, as though some great blessing had been communicated to a few, which the great masses of men were neither allowed nor intended to share. There could not be a grosser misunderstanding of the Word, and it would be impossible more absolutely to misread God's intention, than to suppose that, at His arbitrary pleasure, He had deigned to bless a few select souls, whilst the whole human race was left to rot in destitution and misery.

Election is not exclusive but inclusive; for the benefit, not of the few, but of the many; not for selfish ease, but for

strenuous service. There are elect stars, elect tribes of animals, elect flowers and fruit, elect races, and elect souls. "One star differeth from another star in glory." But these special endowments are intended to qualify them for ampler and wider service to the whole universe, that the sum-total of good and happiness may be increased. Israel was elect, not for themselves, nor for the sake of their future, but for the service which they were to be called upon to render to the whole race of man.

Let us view their special advantages in the light of such an election. Theirs was the adoption. Israel was God's first-born. "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Israel is My son, My first-born; and I have said unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me." But why this selection of Israel for so high an honour, except that out of the chosen race *He* should be born, Who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, but was

declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from among the dead, even Jesus Christ our Lord; that through Him we might all receive the adoption of sons, and that the whole race might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Theirs was the glory. The Shekinah burnt in the acacia-bush of the wilderness before the awestruck eyes of Moses, flamed at night from the pillar of cloud, like the watch-fires of the sentry-hosts of angels; and successively filled the desert tabernacle and the noble Temple. "It came even to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the cymbals and trumpets and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, 'For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever,' that then the House was filled with a

cloud, even the House of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the House of God."

But why this Shekinah glory, except that they might shed light on those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death? The Holy City was bidden to arise and shine, that nations might come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.

Theirs were the covenants. The covenant of Sinai was made with them, that they should be named priests of the Lord, and that men should call them ministers of our God; and when they continued not in that covenant, God made with them another, which we know best in the words of our Lord as "the new covenant."

But clearly this new covenant was not exclusively for them, but through them for us all. They that are of the

faith of Abraham are blessed with him. All the promises made to the Seed are ours in Christ. In *our* minds, and on *our* hearts God will write His law; to *us* He will be a God, and we may be His people; He will be merciful to *our* iniquities, and *our* sins and iniquities He will remember no more.

Theirs was the giving of the law. And the object was that its blessings might be universally distributed. It has been justly said that their sacred poets and minstrels have furnished the bridal hymns, the battle songs, the pilgrim marches, the penitential prayers, and the public praises of every nation in Christendom since Christendom was born. Their prophets and seers have beheld visions of the Glorious Goal to which the whole creation is slowly moving, which have stimulated and sustained the hopes of our race in its pilgrim march. Their sacred books have passed into the heart and speech of

mankind; and their sufferings are a warning of the fate which must overtake all who refuse their high vocation, betray their sacred trust, and treat their election as a matter of private advantage.

Abraham was blessed that he might be a blessing, and this was intended to be the characteristic of his progeny. Not for their comfort or pride, but for the sake of the light they were to kindle and the life they were to inspire, were they raised to be the spiritual aristocracy of the race. As the ganglions of the brain which generate the nerve-force of the body, not for their own behoof, but for the right ordering of the entire organism, so were the Hebrew people intended to be the nerve centres of the world. But when they refused, when they shut themselves up in haughty exclusiveness, branding the Samaritan as a pariah and the Gentile as a dog, and when even the Pharisees viewed the

unlettered populace of their own race as accursed, the time was ripe for the watchers in the Temple to hear the rustling of wings and the utterance of mysterious voices, saying, "Let us depart." The purpose for which the Hebrew race had been chosen had been frustrated, and there was no alternative than to cast them on the dust-heap of the world.

The fatal lack of Judaism. Judaism which was represented by men like Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul had been educated, represented a very distinct advance of religious thought on the conclusions of Natural Religion.

They believed in the unity and spirituality of God. That God was One and that He was a Spirit, had been burnt into their hearts during long and bitter sufferings. *They believed* that God was the Creator, and therefore greater than His works; Infinite, and therefore greater than any Temple made by hands.

He was the All-Giver, and therefore needed nothing from men, because He gave to all life, and breath, and all things. There was no danger of Pantheism for the Hebrew, because He felt that God was Transcendent as well as Immanent. Neither was there peril of a visionary transcendentalism or mysticism, because the Jew felt that he lived and moved and had his being in the Divine environment. *They believed* in the Divine Forgiveness, though they were not sure of its basis in righteousness. The sacrifices of innumerable victims were still offered in the Temple, but those sacrifices were felt to be insufficient. They could never, as one of the profoundest Jewish thinkers confessed, "with the same sacrifices, which they offered year by year, make perfect those who drew nigh." They were not perfected in peace, or joy, or confidence, else they would have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having been

once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins. In those sacrifices, therefore, there was only a yearly remembrance of sins. In the judgment of their theologians and teachers, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. *They believed* also, from the days of the Maccabees, with growing clearness of vision, in the future state of the resurrection.

But amid much that was excellent and beautiful, of Judaism, as of Gentilism, it was true that the fatal lack was of "*Power unto Salvation.*" There was not a sufficient dynamic. It is true that the Holy Spirit had been given to a few of the noblest, rarest spirits of their race, to a Samuel, a David, an Elijah, an Ezekiel, but for the most part the masses of the people were unconscious of His Divine energies.

In Alpine regions the traveller will behold wonderful spectacles at early dawn. It will seem to him that some high angel, having lit his torch at the

Eternal Altar, is stepping from summit to summit, which had been awaiting his advent wrapped in solemn majesty. Suddenly one after another begins to burn. The snowy summits are steeped in fire. They arise and shine, because the glory of the Lord has smitten them; but as yet the lower slopes are swathed in mist. The valleys resemble vast cauldrons in which the clouds are seething, and so it will be for some few hours, until the sun can strike with vertical rays into their most hidden recesses. Then every stick and stone casts a shadow. Every valley becomes exalted to share the glory which in the earlier hours of the day pertained only to the highest peaks. Thus it was with the Hebrew race. Their prophets and kings knew by happy experience the *Dynamic* of the Holy One, but their sons and daughters, the servants and handmaids knew the *Ethic* only, and they were therefore taught to expect another age

when the Spirit should be poured out upon *all* flesh, when sons and daughters should prophesy, when young men should see visions and old men dream dreams, and when upon servants and handmaidens that same Spirit should be poured forth.

The casting-off of the chosen people. For want of sufficient dynamic, that power unto salvation, that mighty quickening Spirit, the Hebrew people as a whole lost sight of the higher ideals of their race. At the time when the Epistle to the Romans was written, they had bowed their necks to foreign masters, had substituted a lifeless ritualism for vital religion, and had become debased enough to denounce and reject Him whose holy character and merciful ministry marked Him as the white flower of their race.

It is not enough to know, man must have power to be and do, or he drifts as a doomed vessel to the teeth of the jagged rocks. The awful havoc caused in

Judaism by this fatal lack of spiritual power is recited by one of the greatest of the sons of Israel, in immortal words, and we will take them as expressing the lament of the purest and noblest spirits of his race in that eventful age which culminated in the overthrow of Temple and City:

"The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not that I do. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin

which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This is one of the deepest pieces of spiritual experience in the literature of the world. It expresses the ultimate verdict of the soul on Judaism. Great and good as its conceptions of the Divine Being and of Duty were, it lacked the driving-power, the divine energy, and that concord with the Divine nerve-centres of the Universe, which was to be supplied in the fulness of time. The inability of Judaism to meet the ultimate and imperative need of the human soul was a mute and eloquent appeal to God to hasten the introduction of a new Age, when the ancient prayer should be realised: "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, and upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself, so shall we not go back from Thee. Quicken Thou us, and we will call upon Thy Name."

It was Paul's lot to live when the chosen people were being cast aside, but, as Rom. ix.—xi. proves, he saw clearly that they would be taken again in hand. He saw the Church called to fulfil their functions and do their work. Above all he saw the perfect flower of the Hebrew race in the peerless beauty of the Lord of Light and Glory.

IV

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH

"Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized, and the same day were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and in breaking of bread and in prayers."—Acts ii. 41, &c.

Looking back over the intervening valley of some thirty years, Luke described the infancy of the Church, which at the time in which he wrote was entering upon her death grapple with Paganism. The brightness and glory of her dawn had somewhat faded from the sky. Her simplicity, unity, and family life were not now preserved in their pristine integrity. Persecution had broken the regular formation of the early Church. Luke himself, the companion of St. Paul, had become familiar with scenes of imprisonment and suffer-

ing, and looking back over the range of thirty years, lingered on this portrayal of the first glad days when the Church of Christ emerged from the upper room, and took its place amid the forces which strove for the mastery of the world.

The Church was born on the morning of Resurrection. The materials of which she was composed had probably been prepared beforehand, but the Church itself dates from that hour when, like Eve, she was taken from the second Adam while he slept. Now for the first time she appeared before men as a regularly constituted organism, and was thenceforth to play a wonderful part in the history of the race, as the residence and implement of the Holy Spirit, and for bringing in that new Kingdom of righteousness — the new heavens and earth with which creation travails.

It is easy to discern the bright and beautiful freshness of that dawn. The dew was on the grass, the breath of

morning air fanned every face, the carol of the birds of hope was in the trees; it was the dawn of a new society, with all the joy and gladness with which a new beginning, and especially a new religious beginning, stirs the heart of man.

Note that there were new teachers, new methods of worshiping God, a new constitution of society, new signs of power, and new joy and hope.

First, *there were new teachers.* "They continued steadfastly in the *Apostles'* teaching and fellowship." Who were they? Might they be saluted as "Rabbi"? Had they any right to the deep and broad phylactery? Were they recognised amongst the priests and teachers of Jerusalem? Were they Levites or Scribes? Certainly not. They were unlettered men. Their brogue betrayed their provincial origin. There was not one of them who had ever attended the School of Gamaliel, or sat at the feet of the great Hebrew Professors.

Up till then they had been artisans, fishermen, simple and very ordinary people; some had forsaken their Master in the hour of trial, and none seemed to have capacity to understand the marvellous scope of His purpose; yet these men were suddenly uplifted to the position of teaching thousands of new-born converts who apparently gave the go-by to priests, teachers, and learned Rabbis, and sat and listened to the words of fire and wisdom which proceeded from these untutored lips.

It was a great wonder that such men should suddenly, in a single day, step out of the ranks of ordinary life to become the teachers of the Church. Nothing can account for it except that qualities are bestowed upon them by the direct afflatus of the Holy Spirit, enabling them not only to address vast crowds of people, but to build up the believers who steadfastly attended their ministry.

Note what that teaching must have

meant. First, that Jesus Christ had fulfilled the Old Testament predictions, and secondly, that He had left a variety of instructions and ordinances for the guidance of His people. We can imagine those three thousand souls, gathering in the Temple courts day by day because no other place could hold them, or it may be finding their way to some sequestered nook on Olivet, whilst Peter, John or James would explain the Old Testament Scripture in the light of the Saviour's words. I think that that lost Gospel, which evidently underlies the three synoptic Gospels, possibly emerged then and was reiterated again and again to the people, as the Apostles told of all that Jesus had said and done.

Were men groping and feeling after God? They said that Christ had revealed Him. Were men longing to know God? They taught that He who had spoken in divers manners and ways by the prophets had now spoken in these last

days in His Son. Did they want to know how their sins might be forgiven consistently with righteousness? They were now informed that God had set *Him* forth as the Propitiation for the sins of the world. All this and much more was poured forth in burning eloquence upon the crowds, as they gathered day by day, until a great basis of Christian doctrine was laid, upon which presently the Church was to arise.

Second, *there were new methods of worship.* It is quite clear that they did not forsake the Temple, sacred with so many memories. Why should they? They believed all that the rest of the nation believed, with one thing more, which made all the difference, that Jesus Christ was the long-expected Messiah. And there is every evidence that for forty years, until Jerusalem fell, the Christian Church was more or less imbued with reverence and veneration for the ancient forms of worship. "They were daily *in*

the Temple" ; and it must have been a very remarkable sight to have beheld that great congregation of three thousand men and women wedged into the midst of the dense masses who were accustomed to assemble there. But in addition to that daily assemblage at the Temple service, they practised the rite of Baptism, which was so closely associated with the ministry of the Forerunner, though now invested with a new and beautiful significance; they practised also the breaking of bread, as at night they would gather in some common meeting-place, like the upper room, or perhaps from house to house, those who were rich and had spacious apartments welcoming the rest. There the wine was poured out, and the bread broken, and thus the Church observed each day the Lord's Supper as it had come fresh from the hands of the Master. By observing it, they held fellowship with Him Who unseen presided at the feast, and yielded His Body

and Blood for their hunger and thirst. In addition to the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, there are evidently traces of the establishment of special meetings for prayer. We are told, "They continued in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in *prayers*," so that our prayer meetings are in direct descent from that Pentecostal time, when, for the first time in the history of the Church, untutored, unlettered, and illiterate men and women were accustomed to break forth in prayer to the Risen Lord.

Third, *there were new conceptions of a Religious Society.* It was modelled on that of a family, of a home. And a very beautiful conception it was, which arose so naturally out of our Saviour's own example, for you will remember that our Lord's work was pre-eminently a social one. Directly he had left His mother's home, He began to gather disciples around Him, and all through those three years

by the seaside, in the boat, on the mountain, in the city, and amongst the villages, He was always one of a society. Jesus Christ founded the Christian Community or Society, which we know as the Church, and inaugurated it as a family. Disciples lived together, they were taught to consider and minister tenderly to each other, there would be all the give and take of a family; and it was in this contact with Himself and with each other that the first apostles were moulded. Towards the close of our Lord's ministry, holy women were allowed to gather with them and to minister to their need. In the upper room the Church was cradled, and so, when three thousand souls were added it was only necessary to push back the family barriers to include them. But they were all brothers and sisters, and gathered in fellowship with their unseen Head.

We must notice the Church's unity and community of goods.

(1) *Her unity.* The Church of Rome

has always dreamt of a vast uniformity when all men shall worship in the same posture, hold the same creed, obey the dictates of one supreme head, the Pope; but it has been shown through the history of Europe and the world, that such uniformity can only be achieved at the sacrifice of life. When you attempt to press men into one bond and compact, or into the same mould, you kill the individuality of the living soul; and so when the Reformation burst upon Europe, the whole continent lay in a profound sleep of death, on which Luther broke with his clarion note of freedom. But that dream must pass. Uniformity was never Christ's ideal, but the unity in which variety gives charm, and supplies the need and lack of each and all. Take the family—how interesting its variety—the boys and girls, the elder ones and the little children, and how each supplies what the other lacks, so that all its members stand together as a whole. Happy

is the family-group which is large enough to allow of that charming variety, which is pervaded and knit together by a common spirit of unity. That was Christ's conception, the unity of the family with variety in its members. The Bible is one, though its authors and styles are so different; the body is one, though its members are so various; and the Church is one, though with an infinite variety of disposition and temperament; therefore there need be no foothold for jealousy or rivalry.

(2) *There was a community of goods.* The distribution of property was not compulsory, but each disciple did it voluntarily, and as the natural thing. There were the Apostles to be maintained, the wealthy and aged to be cared for, the women and children to be provided for; many of the disciples had come from all parts of the world, and before they returned home needed to spend some months under the Apostles' teach-

ing and direction; and therefore as a matter of free-will, because there must be no lack, the richer members, like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, Mary, and others were glad to dispose of their property in order that they might minister with a loving hand to the needs of their fellow-disciples. But this voluntary community of goods was as far as possible removed from Communism, or from those advanced forms of Socialism which desire to secure equality by compulsion. There is all the difference in the world between a man saying "You *shall* be equalised down to me" and the man who is prepared, if he stands on a higher level, to lift others to an equality with himself by his own free choice.

Fourth, *there was a new sense of power.* Just then the Roman Empire was beginning to be paralysed. It seemed as though the supplies of virile energy proceeding from the human mind and soul were commencing to dry up, and at that very

moment there burst upon the world a new conception of a power which lay beyond the reach of the human soul in the living God, and which was to be received day by day by faith. "Ye shall receive power," said Christ, and they received so much that there was an overflowing exuberance. It seemed as though the early confessors and martyrs could not find sacrifices hard enough to show how much power they possessed. The Holy Spirit, who had been before an atmosphere, had now become a Person: He was no longer the God of the hills alone but of the valleys also; He was not only outside the believer, but in him as a spring that rose to everlasting life; He not only enabled the greatest saints to do their mightiest deeds, but came upon handmaidens and children, upon young and old, and empowered them, so that all life became renewed because of the energy and vigour which flowed from the Living Head.

This after all is the greatest gift of Christ. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell." When He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and entered the Father's presence, He asked no boon for Himself, but that the Holy Spirit who had been one with Him from all eternity should now dwell in His risen and ascended body in all the fulness of Deity. Did He not say, "I will pray the Father for you"? and did not Peter in his Pentecostal sermon tell us that He had received of the Father the promise of the Spirit which He shed forth? We must believe therefore that in the Divine-human nature of Christ, ascended to the right hand of power, the Holy Spirit dwells, that He may be communicated to all those who are in living union with Christ as the sap flows from the roots to the furthest branches, and as the blood is driven from the heart to the extremities of the body. There is a

reservoir of power in the Son of God on which the whole Church has a right to lay claim, and if there is nothing between a man's soul and the Living Christ, moment by moment there comes the sensible inflow of Divine energy which nourishes the incorruptible seed of the Christ-germ, sown in every regenerate nature. In the power of that life we no longer strive against our sins and failures as a Stoic might, but receive a direct impartation of the Divine nature which lifts us above their tyranny. It was with this sense of power that the Church broke upon the world. The moan of the soul, "What I would, I do not," became transformed into the rapturous outburst, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Fifth, *there was a new joy and gladness.* Dean Stanley records the deep impression that was made on him by the verse, "They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," and from those

words he deduces the fact of the primitive Christian joy. Theirs was the gladness *of young life* as we meet it in our nurseries or the pasture-lands. It was the gladness which comes *from singleness of heart;* they were animated by a transparent simplicity and sincerity of motive. It is the single eye which is full of light; it is the heart with the undivided purpose which is truly happy. It is because we are divided over so many interests that we are so distracted with care. *They lived by the day.* "Continuing daily." Instead of worrying about what the future might bring, they lived in the present tense, always the secret of happiness. *There was the communication of a new hope.* They heard the music of the angels, as John heard it in the Apocalypse, ringing beneath the war and strife of the world. That is a beautiful story of the boy who heard the music of the bells, saying, "Turn again." Beneath all the noise of London he could

detect the minstrels of hope predicting that if he turned again he would ascend to the magistracy of the great city. And the early Church heard the music of the bells of heaven, as they rang out that all were going to turn again, that God was going to bring about the restitution of all things, and that the world was finally to return to the golden age, the summer of existence. *There was the joy of constant fresh accessions.* "The Lord added to them day by day *those who were being saved.*" "My brother has come, my sister is coming, my old father and mother have come, my work-people are being saved." The body of three thousand was always swelling; new voices saying, "He has saved me;" new faces lit up and wreathed in smiles and tears; new lives transformed. Oh, cannot you imagine those daily additions, the throng in the midst of the Temple courts growing and growing as new converts gathered? Those of us who have

gone through revival times; those who have seen fathers weeping over their prodigal children; those who have seen mothers, the Monicas who have prayed and wept for their Augustines, can tell something of the unearthly, heavenly joy with which those happy faces shone.

What an exquisite citation Dr. Rendel Harris made recently from his own translation of the *Apology of Aristides*, as a picture of primitive Christian life. "If any righteous person of their number passes away from the world, they rejoice and give thanks to God, and they follow his body as if he were moving from one place to another; and when a child is born to any of them they praise God, and again if it chances to die in its infancy they praise God mightily as for one who has passed from the world without sins; and if again they see that one of their number has died in his iniquity and in his sins, over this one they weep bitterly and sigh as

over one who is about to go to punishment." Well may he add, "How contagious must their happiness have been when it dared to make laws to death, and refused to let him cast a gloom over the Christian's burial." In Christianity a man not only escapes from the horrible pit, but sings a new song on its margin, and no exiles that ever returned from the land of captivity could say more truthfully, "Our mouth is filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

Oh beautiful infancy! Oh golden age! Oh radiant dawn! Oh morning without clouds! Oh bright and beautiful inauguration of the new age! Would that it had been perpetuated always! May we live to see it come again! May we see a good deal of the present misunderstanding removed, and pray that in our day the one Church of God may come back to the family life, and again typify to mankind the glorious Bride of the Son of Man.

V

THE UNSAVED SAVIOUR

"Save Thyself." "He saved others; Himself He cannot save."—MATT. xxvii. 40, 42.

OUR Lord probably stood for the first time before Pilate at six in the morning, and the final order to lead Him to the Cross would have been about eight. The scourging must have taken some twenty minutes, so that it would be about 8.30 on the day of the Crucifixion when the procession left the Hall of Pilate. An entire cohort of soldiers was probably set apart for the closing tragedy of His life, four of them being detailed to accompany Him, and four to guard each of the malefactors that followed Him. The centurion of the whole company generally preceded the cohort. It is not difficult to imagine that procession along the "Via Dolorosa," as it is called

—the centurion first, on each side a line of soldiers in single file, in the centre the three who were to be crucified. It was a holiday—the shops were all closed, and from every street the crowds poured until they stood in one vast concourse to watch the procession, for Jesus was well known. The details of His life had been carefully followed, and many were under a deep debt of obligation, and desired to see Him for the last time.

He had not been refreshed by sleep, had taken no nourishment since the Paschal meal, had passed through paroxysms of emotion and conflict in the meantime, had experienced the bitterness of scourging and mocking. We cannot, therefore, wonder that His emaciated body, worn and wan, sank beneath the Cross, eliciting from the women of Jerusalem groans and tears of pity as they wept for Him. A countryman who happened to be passing by, and whose appearance indicated that he was not a

citizen of Jerusalem, Simon of Cyrene, was arrested, and compelled to bear the Cross; and there are words that seem to suggest that our Lord was almost carried in a fainting condition for the remainder of the way.

The procession descended into the most busy and crowded thoroughfare of the whole city, and so out, through the northern gate, to a place which by its configuration approached as nearly as possible to the likeness of a skull—as we speak of the *brow* of a hill, so they spoke of the place as Golgotha, the *skull* of the mount—and there they crucified Him.

The details of that crucifixion are indescribably harrowing; and although none of us ought to shrink from reading them, yet it is a comfort to realise that, after all, the effect of our Saviour's death upon us is not primarily intended to be an emotional one, but to touch the will, purpose, and determination of our life.

The description of that terrible scene,

when the hands and feet were nailed by the sharp spikes, and the Cross raised with its dependent body until it reached the required elevation, with the weight of the body thrown largely on the hands and feet, might excite our tears and lead to profoundest emotion, and yet we might go forth to crucify Him afresh. Therefore, it seems better not to deal with the emotional, nor detail the various items of anguish and shame to which the Master was exposed, but to resolve with the Apostle that from henceforth we also will go forth unto Him, bearing His reproach, that we may be crucified with Him, and that through His death for us, in which we also are called to participate, we may pass into the Easter morning, and presently help to save a dying world.

When finally the Cross was set up, and the awful tragedy began, it would seem that there was let loose amid the crowd that gathered around an unholy ribaldry,

for which surely malicious spirits must have been responsible. For the most part, a death scene will elicit from the most hardened the sob of awe, pity, and deep emotion; but neither reverence, emotion, nor awe had any place in that scene. The soldiers mocked Him as they quaffed His health in their light wine, and said: "If Thou be the King of the Jews, as the proclamation above Thee indicates, then save Thyself." The malefactors, in easy speaking distance on right and left, said the same thing: "If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself." Presently, the men and women that walked to and fro, mocking Him and shaking their heads in scorn, took up words which they had heard from His lips long before, and maybe had often pondered: "Thou that destroyest the Temple, save Thyself, and come down from the Cross." Even the Sanhedrists themselves, priests some of them, fathers, the grey-headed leaders of the people, did

not think it beneath their dignity to cast the same in His teeth as they said: "If Thou art the King of Israel, come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Thee." From the soldiers, from the dying malefactors, from the people as they went to and fro, and from the Sanhedrin itself—from all their lips, in one vociferating chorus, these words were poured upon the ears of Christ—"Save Thyself, come down from the Cross." And when He maintained an absolute silence—the silence of power, the silence of conscious dignity, the silence of one who was going through too great an ordeal to return reply—when He remained absolutely silent and transfixed, they concluded that He who had saved others could not save Himself. They never uttered a more absolute truth, for Jesus could not save Himself, not because of the nails that pierced Him, not because of the cohort that crucified Him, but because He was a

voluntary sufferer, who was nailed to that Cross by an inflexible resolve that He would save the world by the sacrifice of Himself. He saved others, of course He could not save Himself; and it is because He refused to come down from the Cross that the world believes.

You will notice that He could not save Himself for three reasons: *First*, He ould not save Himself because He was determined to fulfil the will of God. *Second*, He could not save Himself because only in self-giving could He save mankind. *Third*, He could not save Himself because only through death could He destroy him that had the power of death, and there was no other path by which He could become the High Priest of men.

1. *He could not save Himself because He had elected to do the will of God.* He had the power. The power which had thrown the squadron of soldiers on their backs in the garden of Gethsemane, the

power which could call for twelve legions of angels, the power that healed the ear of Malchus—all that power was resident in Him, and at any moment He could have stepped down from the Cross. Leaving His Father's presence in the eternal world, His last word had been, "In the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God." With that purpose in His mind, He had stooped to become the babe in Mary's arms, to grow up in the obscurity of Nazareth, to descend into the waters of the Jordan, to traverse three years of constant hardship and sorrow, until He had reached the point in His life at which He seemed to stand absolutely alone in an awful solitude; but He had never diverged from the plan of the Father's will. He had built everything upon the pattern shown Him on the Mount; and even in the Garden, when the pressure of His own will had reached its highest, He immediately quenched it. As a child

weaned from his mother's breast, so He quieted and calmed Himself, and said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God." It was because that will led, as of old the Shekinah cloud, to the Cross standing upon Golgotha, that He would not turn a hair's-breadth to the right or the left. He could not save Himself if He would do God's will.

Our Lord was pinioned to the Cross by a supreme devotion to the Divine purpose. It is permissible to the missionary, pursued by violence, to escape if he can, that under happier conditions he may continue his life-work; but it was not permissible for the Redeemer to avoid the sentence of death. From the first He knew that He must be "lifted up." All through His career, when voices of prudence prompted Him to save Himself, He refused. It was only by death that He could effectually seal His testimony for righteousness, and stamp His words with the mint-mark of eternal truth

besides fulfilling the ancient prophecies, revealing the infinite love of God, and finishing the salvation of men.

It has sometimes seemed to me that this is the explanation of the anguish of Gethsemane. Our Lord was only thirty-three. Life was still strong within Him. Using His own comparison, He was a fir-tree in the forest glade, in the prime of its strength. It was only natural that He should desire—speaking of Him according to His humanity—to live longer, utter His wonderful words, and do deeds as startling as the raising of Lazarus. Surely these would have arrested Jerusalem from her headlong downward career; surely there would have been a hope that the fate which was impending over the city might be averted; but it was as though the Father said to Him, "This is not the appointed way; only through death can the full purpose of Thy life be fulfilled," and therefore resisting the clinging love of life, He

turned resolutely to follow the dark cypress-lined and rugged path that led to Calvary.

It is a great moment in life when the soul deliberately determines that the will of God shall be its supreme rule; that it will never knowingly do anything outside the limits of that will, and that so far as possible it will realise all that is contained within it. The moment when the soul resolves upon this may be described as the inauguration of a life of consecration. Then we say, as the Lord said, "For their sakes I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated through the truth." Then, also, we may say with the prophet, "The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." The opened ear may refer either to the boring of the ear to the

doorpost of the house in which the peasant had found shelter and food (Exodus xxi. 6; Psalm xl. 6), or it may refer to the putting back of the long or bushy hair which covered the ear, that nothing might intercept the least whisper of the speaker's voice; but in either case it sets forth that life of entire devotion to the will of God of which Samuel is a prime example, the chord of whose life was struck in that earliest utterance, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

It is quite certain that a resolve of that sort will bring us, as it brought Him, to the Cross; we cannot save ourselves if we have made up our mind to do the will of God; but probably we shall never know the blessedness of life until we drink of His cup, and are baptized with His baptism, and pass through union with His Cross into union with Him in His Resurrection. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and

die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

2. *He could not save Himself, for it was only in self-giving that He could save.* That is one of the deepest laws of human love. If it be asked what she shall do to save her child, a mother will gladly give herself to vigil by night and self-denial by day. The patriot will give himself for his country, and be proud to do it; and no man is ever likely to save humanity until he will give himself to tears and blood for men. This is a law deep as the nature of God. Would you make the impure pure? You must save yourself from impurity. Would you save men from selfishness? You must be saved from the self-taint. Would you give life? You must be prepared to sacrifice your own.

When the daughters of Jerusalem wept for Him, He said, "Do not weep for Me," and put away their sympathy from Him. When He came to the Cross,

and they offered Him the stupefying draught, He refused to drink it, as though He said, "I must suffer with a clear mind, that I may be able to prove the power of God to the uttermost." He seemed to forget Himself absolutely as He cried, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." And when the dying thief asked to be remembered, He replied, "Remember thee! I will do much more than that, for thou shalt be with Me to-day in Paradise." When John came within speaking distance of the Cross with Mary and the rest, as He beheld them, again He forgot Himself entirely, and only asked that John should take His mother to his home. When He entered the three hours of darkness, even then He thought not of Himself, for He said, "My blood is shed for many for the remission of sins." The only expression suggestive of self during those six hours of anguish was that cry, "I thirst;" but even that

seems to have been absolutely unselfish, when we remember that probably He found His strength was ebbing so fast as to suggest the fear lest He would pass away from this world in a state of coma, and He desired to meet death face to face. Therefore He said in effect, "Give Me something to support Me in this terrible exhaustion, that for the next few minutes I may be able buoyantly and intelligently to pursue My purpose to the end."

It may be asked, In what way has Christ's self-giving availed to help men? When it is said "He gave Himself a ransom for all," what does it exactly mean? We must never think that our Lord stepped in to appease the otherwise implacable wrath of the Father. Too often the work of the Cross has been so explained as to suggest that the Father was full of vengeance, and that His gentler Son stepped in, and stood between Him and man, intercepting

the blow which otherwise must have descended upon our race. Too often the illustration has been used of the master in a school punishing a good boy for a bad one. This is an inadequate and unscriptural method of explaining the stupendous significance of that work performed amid blood and tears, darkness and forsakenness, of which Jesus said, "It is finished." We must never forget the emphatic way in which the Apostle says that "*God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto Himself." Whatever our Lord did was the expression of the Father's self-giving. The true illustration, therefore, is not that of the teacher punishing a good boy for an evil, but of a father taking upon himself the indebtedness, disgrace, and penalty which some child might have incurred, that by bearing these he might put the consequences of the sin away. Before God's love to men, which had been from eternity, could flow freely out to save, it was

necessary that some claim of righteousness should be met, which we may not be able fully to understand in our present life, and it was only when this had been adequately satisfied that God's tender and compassionate pity could have free course and be glorified in seeking and saving men. He is just, and the justifier.

This, at least, we must never forget, that whatever was done on the Cross was done for the whole race. "The Lamb of God beareth away the sin of the *world*." "He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but for the sins *of the whole world*." "He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Whatever penalty accrued to men as members of a fallen family has been cancelled by the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven. This is a redeemed world, and if men are lost, it is not because of sins committed by their ancestors or themselves, but because by rebellion, negligence, and the refusal to accept

such truth as was within their reach, they have shut themselves away from God's redeeming love and mercy. We can never meet a man, therefore, for whom Christ did not die, who was not included in the work of the Cross, whose sin was not borne in Christ's body on the tree. Men may know nothing of our Lord's work on their behalf; they may only exercise faith, as we have said, in that revelation of the truth, more or less, which has been made to them; but on the ground of that faith, righteousness is imputed to them, and they are treated as if their faith had embraced some fuller revelation of Divine truth. As soon as their eyes are opened to understand their true position, it will become manifest to them that God was able to deal with them on terms of grace because on the "green hill far away, without the city wall," in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, He took upon Himself the shame and

sorrow and burden of a world's indebtedness, and met it. This is a great mystery, but it is the one clue to the justifying righteousness of God, which is unto all who do not refuse it.

3. *He could not save Himself, because only in death could He deliver those who through fear of death were subject to bondage.* Only in death could its sting be extracted, and the grave deprived of victory. Therefore He must go through it, that none of us need ever know the bitterness of death, but might have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God.

He could not save Himself from death, because away beyond the confines of this world He saw the throng of angels gazing intently upon that last passage, and beckoning Him to His throne, and there was only one way by which that throne could be reached. He saw also the myriads of souls who had been saved through previous ages, in anticipation of His death, and who were

waiting to receive the assurance that their deliverance was perfected; and He looked forward to the millions who in coming time would be helped and comforted from the throne of His High-Priestly humanity. Do you wonder that, when He heard the angel-voices saying, "Great King, through this Thou shalt come to Thy throne," and heard the myriads who had preceded His death saying, "Even thus Thou shalt accomplish our redemption," and anticipated the millions more who were to be saved when He had overcome the sharpness of death, and had opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers, He bowed His head to bear the yoke, pour out His life, and give Himself a ransom for all?

It was with great wonder that the Apostle Paul contemplated the successive stages down which our Lord passed to the grave. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of

the Cross." If death was inevitable, He might have died as fades the summer cloud away, or as the eye of day closes in a soft autumn evening; He might have died in the dear home of Bethany with Martha ministering, and Mary watching every flicker of His waning life. With the window open towards the Jerusalem that He loved so well, He might have passed into the Eternal City to be welcomed as the King of Glory, but this would not suffice Him. He knew that His martyred disciples would tread a rougher pathway, would drink a more bitter cup, would be compelled to pass through more heart-rending scenes of rejection and physical pain, and therefore He set Himself to undergo the most shameful and painful death known even to the brutal Phœnicians or Romans. "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." He has gone along the path of suffering and death, which our human nature might be expected to shrink from

with the greatest dread, and in going He has snapped the twigs of the trees, as they do in new countries when they open fresh pathways through the forest, for those who follow to be assured of the track. "Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered those who all their life-time were subject to bondage." The weakest and most timid of the Lord's disciples may now say boldly and fearlessly, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"*He saved others, Himself He cannot save.*" A great principle underlies these words. Spoken in jest and sarcasm, they contain a truth of universal application. Men cannot be saved except at infinite cost to the Saviour. It is impossible to lift men from impurity to purity, unless we deny ourselves ungodly and worldly lusts; to save men from selfishness, unless we crucify our self-life; or to lift the world to the heart of

God, if we succumb to the fascinations of the world-spirit. To give a guinea to this society or that, to take one's place on a committee or council, to attend anniversary meetings or mingle in the enthusiasm with which the burning oratory of eminent speakers is received, is like attempting to extinguish a fire with the contents of a watering-can. Men can only be saved from their sins by an absolute sacrifice on the part of mother, wife, lover, or friend. Society can only be saved by a sacrifice similar to that which is said to have closed the yawning gulf in the market-place of Rome, when the scion of a noble house, fully armed, spurred his charger into the ghastly chasm. It is when the Church is crucified with Christ, and accounts that her blood is not too great a price to pay for an atonement through love and self-sacrifice—it is only under such circumstances that a work of lasting revival can be inaugurated.

But out of all the anguish of the Church's travail there will be born the age which many wise men and prophets were permitted to see, though not to enter. The first day of a new week will dawn. Men shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. There will be *liberty*, for men will bear each other's burdens; *equality*, for the down-trodden and oppressed will be raised to the level of the more fortunate; and *brotherhood*, for the love of God will be the all-including bond of humanity. The groans and woes of creation shall be exchanged for the joy of a mother over her first-born. Not by the crash of revolution, but by the spiral stair-case of evolution, shall the world pass from the chaos of a formless void to a cosmos of perfect beauty and order, concerning which the Creator shall say, "It is very good." The coral island of that golden age is by this time not very far from emerging above the surface of the

stormy waters. For long ages it has been climbing upwards from the ocean-depths, beneath the directing and moulding hand of God, and lo! the hour is at hand for the manifestation in its Eden of the sons of God. Then the Son of Man shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Then the mystery of God will be finished. Then a great voice will be heard in Heaven, saying, "Behold, I make all things new; I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
So God has greatly purposed, who would else
In His dishonour'd works Himself endure
Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress.

Haste then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons! We would see
A world that does not dread and hate His laws,
And suffer for its crime; would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good.

VI

THE "FAR-OFF DIVINE EVENT"

"Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power."—1 Cor. xv. 25.

The end is always coming. Nothing that pertains to our mortal life is unending. So soon as anything begins beneath these heavens, with more or less speed it hastens towards its end.

The young man enters a great commercial house. Slowly he rises from post to post, until he becomes one of its partners, and finally the sole proprietor. His name is known and honoured through the world. His cheque is taken for cash, his word is a certain security. Years of honour and wealth pass quickly onward, till one day he shuts his desk for the last time, slams and locks his

safe, says "good afternoon" to the porter, and goes out on the street, never to re-enter the premises which have known him for fifty years.

A young girl enters the house which her husband has prepared for her, and where she is to reign as hostess and mistress. Children are born and grow up, servants get grey-headed in her service. She lives to see her silver, her golden, and her diamond wedding day. But at last the end comes, and all that is mortal of her is carried down the steps up which she tripped so merrily as a laughing bride.

An end comes at last for the poor patient in the cancer ward, one of whose chief comforts is the knowledge that there is an inevitable time-limit beyond which the terrible suffering cannot pass.

The end comes to the long separation between the parted lovers. Whilst the one goes to the front, or travels round the world on some commercial quest, the

other is comforted by remembering that every throb of the travelling clock is one nearer reunion. An end comes to the longest, saddest, weariest life. The shadow on the dial at last reaches the lowest step. The Angelus chimes out in the tower; the last rook joins the noisy brotherhood in the tall trees.

> Be the day dreary, or be the day long,
> At last it ringeth to evensong.

There is great comfort in this thought of finality. We would not live always We are quite glad to reach the inn, and realise that the long trudge is done, even though new and difficult experiences may be awaiting us on the morrow. Some of our fellow-travellers desire the end because they are wearied with the greatness and difficulties of the way; others because they shrink from its perils and dangers; others because in buoyant hope they anticipate the new and untrodden experiences that lie hidden behind the hills. Perhaps, for the most part, there

is more desire than dread at the thought of the inevitable end; yet some dread it. "It is better," they say, "to bear the ills we have, than to fly to others that we know not of." But whether we desire or dread, the great ship is bearing us all forward to the harbour where the voyage shall end, though what shall transpire then, apart from this Book, who knows!

The meaning of this verse becomes clear as soon as we understand the reference to the pronouns. "Then cometh the end, when He (*i.e.*, Christ) shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He (*i.e.*, God the Father) hath put all His enemies under His feet." From this it is clear that our Lord has come forth from the Father to put down all the evil forces that are making havoc of the original creation; that the Father is

pledged to set Him as King upon His holy hill; and that all the Divine energy is at work, never to stay or diminish the force of its mighty operation, until the Divine character is justified, and God shall be All in All.

The Christian Church is therefore filled with a great hope. We do not minimise the forces by which God's purpose is opposed. It is impossible to speak lightly of the pressure of evil as we meet it in all classes of our civilisation—in the highest circles of society and the lowest depths—but we can look forward with unhesitating confidence to the issue. There can be no doubt that light and love will conquer darkness and hate; there is no doubt that all things shall at last be made new, and that the anthem will ring out as a sound of many waters, and as a voice of mighty thunder, saying, "Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth."

We may turn aside here to learn the

lesson taught by the discovery of the geologist, which shows that through ages of conflict, cataclysm, storm and apparent anarchy, God's purpose has pursued its path towards the order and beauty of the natural world. Often during those long dark ages we might have despaired, had we watched some terrific outbreak of natural forces that seemed to defy the hand of the Creator. Sometimes when our planet was robed in a garment of vegetation, which covered the valleys and hills with the exquisite beauty of fern and flower, of shadowing tree and spreading shrub, some outbreak of volcanic disturbance would plunge these fair forms into the dark cellars underground, and it would seem as though God had wrought in vain; but had we been able to wait long enough to watch the advance of the Divine plan, we should have found that these apparent drawbacks were but steps of the mighty process of preparing

man's future home. Can we expect it to be otherwise in the moral and spiritual world? Do not the same laws rule there? Is it not true there also, that the stormy wind fulfils God's word, and that earthquake, tempest, and revolution are bringing about the coming of the kingdom and the performance of His will—"as in heaven so on earth?"

It is impossible to believe that God can have put His hand to anything that shall ultimately defy His will. The fact that Jesus our Lord shed His blood upon the soil of our earth shows to what expenditure the infinite God is prepared to go to undo the evil causd by sin. The coming of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee that the eternal Trinity has put Its hand to the plough, from which there can be no looking back. Before the creation of all things, God considered whether He was able with ten thousand to meet him that came against Him

with twenty thousand, and, because He was well assured of the result, did not hesitate to go forward. God—using the speech of man—has embarked too much capital in the history of our race to be able to afford to lose it. He knows what He is doing; nothing has fallen out which was not anticipated in His eternal plan; nothing with which He is unable to cope; nothing that shall not subserve His purpose. Be of good cheer, fellow disciples; the night is stormy, but daybreak is at hand; the waves threaten to engulf the boat, but the Master at the predestined moment will come walking on the waves as though they were a pavement of alabaster!

The Apostle, in looking forward to the great future, anticipates the end being put to three of the most familiar circumstances of Christian thought and experience.

1. *Christ will abolish all rule and*

all authority and power. The rebellion which is in the moral world against the will and rule of God is often compared to the waves that surge across the ocean, lifting their crests of foam high in the air: "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice." Look where you will there is the yeasty foam, the rush and roar of the breaker, the thunder of the surf as it hurls itself upon the beach. Both earth and heaven seem to be involved in the conflict of will against the government of God. Men fancy themselves to be free; first they mutter, and afterwards say more boldly and defiantly, "Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us." And God appears sometimes to sit still in silence whilst they work on; and, as their designs seem to prosper, human hearts begin to fail them for fear.

But "the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea,

than the mighty waves of the sea." "Thou stillest the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people." "The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yea, He sits King for ever." The great Armada comes in its pride across the waters, and the motto that England struck upon its medal, when that proud fleet was baffled, serves for an epitaph over all antagonism to God's Kingdom: "The Lord blew upon them, and they were scattered." Men may work against God's kingdom, as the waves rave and rage, but as the moon commands the proud waters into tidal waves, so God will have His way at last. In the meantime the Ark of God moves on the face of the waters.

Christ must reign until all enemies are made the footstool of His feet. He shall abolish all rule and all authority and power. The universe may be filled with the armies of the foe marshalled for fight, but the decisive victory was

won on the Cross, which has really settled the final issue. Having put off from Himself the principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His Cross, His Grave, His Resurrection, and His Ascension to the right hand of power. And when the drama is played out to the end, we shall find that all ungodly power and rebellious opposition shall be hushed down into dead silence, never again to revive.

What is true of the universe shall be realised also in our hearts. There also Christ puts down all the rule and authority and power of tyrannous passion and unruly desire. It seems too much to hope for.

> Yet shall it be, We know it shall.
> Jesus, look to Thy faithfulness.

And this not after years have elapsed, and the power of our nature is subdued and tempered by the softening touch of time, but now, and here, *to-day*. The

mistake with so many of us has been that we have endeavoured by resolutions, and in the fervour of our own self-will, to master ourselves, instead of quietly opening the windows of our souls Godward. God's action is quiet, soft, gentle, but omnipotent as light. Offer your whole being to Him. Radium is not more irresistible in its effect. Be content for the X-rays of the Divine nature to play on the cancerous growth which has struck its fangs into your being, and believe that He will bring into captivity every imagination or thought that rears itself against His supremacy. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory, strong and mighty, mighty in battle, shall enter in."

2. *Christ shall abolish death.* "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," for all enemies are to be put beneath His feet.

The word translated "destroyed" is the

same as is used in Rom. vi. of the destruction, or setting aside, of the body of the sins of the flesh in the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord.

It seems as though we are encouraged to believe that Christ is going to give us back all that death has deprived us of, so that its effects shall be absolutely annulled. Death has severed us from our loved ones, broken our close-knit intercourse, compelled us to spend our years in solitariness and loneliness. We shall go to them whom we have loved long since and lost awhile, though they cannot return to us, and it appears as though the joys of the days that are dead shall never come back.

But they shall come back, more certainly than the flowers of next spring. Have we been severed from fond hearts? We shall feel their pulse again next our own. Have we missed the familiar intercourse? We shall see eye to eye, and know as we are known. Have we

been lonely and desolate? We shall come to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Whereas thou wast desolate and solitary, thy heart shall be called Hephzibah and Beulah, for thy God delighteth in thee, and thou shalt find thyself in the midst of solemn troops and sweet societies and loving companions. Has death marred thy body, disfiguring and spoiling its beauty? All traces of its havoc shall be removed—the body of the Resurrection shall be far fairer and more quickly responsive to the east wish of the soul than the body of mortality. In the incorruptible we shall be able to traverse spaces and perform labours for which the body of this corruptible is altogether inadequate. Then shall death be swallowed up in victory, then the poison of its sting shall have been eliminated from the system, then shall the victory of the grave be reversed. Whatever death has done shall be

undone. It shall be as when all traces of the storm that raged yesterday are absolutely obliterated and wiped out, and the birds of peace sit placidly on the tranquil and sparkling wavelets.

3. *Christ shall bring to a close His mediatorial reign.* He shall give up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. He assumed it for a definite purpose and time, and when He has finished all that is in His heart, He will give it back to Him from Whom He received it. It was the Father's Kingdom originally—"Our Father which art in heaven, *Thy* Kingdom come." It was entrusted to His hands as the Father's Vice-gerent. It is being administered for Him in His Father's interests, and for His Father's glory. It will be continued until the Father is universally acknowledged, and then He shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, Who shall be All in All. There will be no further need of the Mediator, because He will have brought

us to God. There will be no further need for the putting forth of His might to subdue all things to Himself, because they will be subdued. "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ."

There is a sense in which the Lord Jesus Christ is also doing this in our hearts. There also He is accomplishing the work of Mediator, which is to be consummated when His own words shall be fulfilled: "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." He is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the Throne of His Father's glory with exceeding joy. Then to us also God shall be All in All.

It is good to know the end or goal at which our blessed Lord is aiming, because it is so much easier to co-operate with Him for the accomplishment of His purposes. We remember His words, and

how He said: "I have not called you servants, but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father, I have made known unto you." Let us desire and seek that He shall say as much to us. Let us ask to be taken into the circle of His inner friends, and to be informed as to what He is set to accomplish.

Then, as the full glory of His mighty plan is revealed to us, piece by piece, like the tabernacle in pattern to Moses on the Mount, we shall go back to the plain with so true a conception filling our hearts that we shall no longer work with the drudgery of the day-labourer, but with the intelligence of the skilled artisan, who has seen the full plan of the great Architect's design. Be of good cheer. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged" (no dim wick nor bruised reed is He—*see* R.V. *margin*), "till He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law."

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